

SOME
OBSERVATIONS

ON THE
MILITIA;

WITH THE
SKETCH of a PLAN

FOR THE
REFORM OF IT.

L O N D O N :

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S O M E
O B S E R V A T I O N S
O N T H E
M I L I T I A,
W I T H T H E
S K E T C H o f a P L A N
F O R T H E
R E F O R M O F I T.

WH O E V E R has turned his thoughts towards the defence of this country, must be sensible that a well constituted National Militia is a very solid advantage to Government; because it is an active force at all times prepared for the moment of emergency, and has a superiority in its composition over every other species of army to be raised from men who voluntarily enlist themselves: and yet, there are persons, who,

who, though warm advocates for militia, have two capital objections to it in its present form; namely, the great detriment it is of to the recruiting service of the Army, in time of war; and the enormous expence to Government, in time of peace: It is to be hoped that the select Committee of Militia Officers will find a remedy for the former objection; but there appears not to be the least probability that the latter will be removed; for though the most rigid frugality has taken place in both the army and navy establishments, and ought also to prevail in every other department of the state; yet we find the Resolutions of the Lords Lieutenants, Colonels of Militia, &c. &c. of the 19th of *March*, announce the necessity of an annual exercising meeting of the whole militia; this meeting, exclusive of the loss of thirty thousand men's labor for twenty-eight days, costs government a
very

very considerable sum of money without any proportionate good resulting from it to the public in return.

But not to interfere any further with the opinions of others, I shall endeavour cursorily to point out some of the defects in the present constitution of the militia, so far as they come within the compass of my knowledge and ability; and shall also propose the outlines of a system, which would ease government of a great part of the annual expence in time of peace; assist, rather than distress, the recruiting of the army in time of war; and would be as essentially useful for the service of the state, as under the present regulations.

The number of militia-men allotted to each county, is in no proportion to the population; yet as it would be attended with some difficulty to ascertain
that

that point with any degree of precision ; I would recommend the present establishment of private men, and the same mode of balloting to be continued, but the time of service to be prolonged.

Three years service is of so short a duration, particularly when the militia is embodied, that the incessant fluctuation of men is productive of great inconvenience and labor to all parties concerned in it. Every one who is conversant with the military profession, knows, that it requires a considerable time and great attention, to instruct and give a man the habits of a soldier, and when they are once acquired, he is of inestimable value ; but though the new militia should be trained and brought to a certain degree of perfection during the two first years service ; yet, at the expiration of that period, they become restless, like the flocks of sheep in Spain before they

they set out on their vernal or autumnal migration, and are impatient of control; whilst the officers are under the necessity of sacrificing discipline, with a view, at the next ballot, to re-inlist the substitutes to which they have taken a fancy.

If it were practicable, the smaller bodies of militia, as in Rutlandshire, Wales, &c. should be associated to form larger battalions, which should not consist of less than four hundred men; at present, those small corps have a staff, battalion clerk, &c. &c. which renders their service inadequate to their expence: When they were last embodied, as they could not act in line, the Commander in Chief attached them to the artillery; because, I suppose, he did not know what else to do with them.

I had once intended to divide the whole militia of the kingdom into five
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different districts, which would have been attended with some peculiar advantages; and to have had them balloted in the same manner that I have adopted for the different battalions; but this division might have been inconvenient, as it would have imposed too permanent a weight upon the less populous counties.

I suppose the campaign to be at an end on the 30th of November.

The private men of every battalion of militia to be divided into five districts, and numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

The district No. 1, should ballot its militia-men to serve for one year, from December 1st, 1785, to November 30th, 1786; and at the expiration of that period, another ballot to be made for five years, and then the ballot to continue regularly every fifth year.

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The district No. 2, should ballot its militia men to serve for two years, from December 1st, 1785; to November 30th, 1787; and at the expiration of that period, another ballot to be made for five years, and then the ballot to continue regularly every fifth year.

The district No. 3, should ballot its militia men to serve for three years, from December 1st, 1785, to November 30th, 1788; and at the expiration of that period, another ballot to be made for five years, and then the ballot to continue regularly every fifth year.

The district, No. 4, should ballot its militia men to serve for four years, from December 1st, 1785, to November 30th, 1789; and at the expiration of that period, another ballot to be made for five years, and then the bal-

lot to continue regularly every fifth year.

The district No. 5, should ballot its militia-men to serve for five years, from December 1st, 1785, to November 30th, 1790; and then the ballot to continue regularly every fifth year.

The vacancies to be filled up as usual, and the numbers to be kept complete.

By this arrangement, a militia regiment is rendered a more permanent body, as the time of only one-fifth of the men expires annually; which gives to a battalion of four hundred men, when embodied, eighty recruits, who would be readily trained, when they came to be incorporated with the more experienced militia-men of the regiment, accustomed to four years service.

I am

I am not sufficiently conversant with the minutiae of the militia, to be aware of the objections that might be made to this division of each battalion; but I see no reason against a disposition that should nearly approach it; it is very immaterial if one district should have ten or fifteen men more or less than any of the others, yet the proportion should be made as correctly as possible.

During the late war, many regiments of militia, I believe I may venture to say all of them, received substitutes from every quarter of the kingdom, and the city of Westminster furnished militiamen for the battalions of the most distant counties; from this mode of proceeding, and the price given for substitutes, no man, who had the smallest degree of reflection, would enlist into the army, whilst he could get such advantageous

tageous terms for serving three years in the militia ; thus this virtuous national defence, by the perversion of its institution, became a bad army, and deprived the regulars of such recruits as would have naturally enlisted with them from the redundancy of men in the more populous counties.

In future, no substitute should be admitted into the militia, who is not an inhabitant of the county, and who has not resided in it for three years, immediately before the time he is enrolled ; a severe penalty upon information to be inflicted on those who take any substitute, and also upon the substitute that does not come within this description : This restriction may distress some few individuals, but partial evil must yield to public good.

When

When it has become an object of government to lower the military establishment in such a manner as to distress the service of the infantry, it is very extraordinary that no one has turned his thoughts towards the establishment of the militia, which has continued invariably the same in peace as in war: A company of infantry is now reduced in its non-commissioned officers, to two serjeants, and one drummer; whilst to a company of militia, in a battalion of five hundred and sixty men, there are three serjeants and two drummers, who have only one months service in the year, and for which they have an equal annual pay and clothing with those of the same class in the army: There can be no reason whatever for keeping up such a number of drones, except it be to give the Colonels of militia the patronage of so many sinecure employments.

A bat-

A battalion of militia of five hundred and sixty men, divided into nine companies, consists of twenty-seven serjeants and eighteen drummers : In time of peace, the serjeants and drummers to be reduced to one serjeant for every fifty men, and one drummer for every hundred men ; one man from every fifty to be taken from amongst the private, and appointed a corporal, and from this class of con-commissioned offices, the serjeants are to be made on vacancies ; besides the utility of this appointment, it would be a spur to industry, and raise a spirit of emulation in the corps ; thus the establishment of non-commissioned officers in this battalion of five hundred and sixty men, would consist of eleven serjeants, eleven corporals, and five drummers, a number amply sufficient, when the militia is disembodied, for the service that would be required from them.

Those

Those non-commissioned officers should not be kept stationary, but ought to be dispersed throughout the county as occasion might require; and made useful to the deputy-lieutenants, adjutants, &c.

Let the different battalions be formed into companies as usual; the non-commissioned officers and private men allotted to them; and the same proportion of commissioned officers to be continued.

The serjeants and drummers to be paid at the usual rate: The corporals are to receive yearly two guineas each, exclusive of their pay, during the exercising meeting: The private men are to be paid at the rate of sixpence *per* day each man, during the exercising meeting, and to receive ten shillings and sixpence each man, when it breaks up; from which, any money that may have

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been

been advanced by the adjutant for necessities, &c. is to be deducted.

The present mode of clothing the militia every three years, appears to be quite unnecessary: A regular soldier receives his appointments every twelve-month, which are found to be sufficient for his hard service; there can be no reason then, that a militia-man, after three months use of his clothing in a country town, should have any claim upon it.

The serjeants and drummers upon the establishment, who are supposed to have their clothing in constant wear, should be clothed annually, as usual; but the following plan is recommended for the corporals and private men.

The clothing is only necessary during the exercising meeting, as a distinguishing
ing

ing mark, and to make the men imagine they possess other qualities in that dress, than in their own homely garb.

Clothing for eleven corporals and one fifth of the private men to be sent to the county previous to the first annual meeting; (of which I shall speak hereafter) this clothing to be used for the exercise, when it is to be returned carefully into store, and for which the regiment is to be responsible: When the militia-man delivers up his arms and appointments, he is to be answerable for any loss of clothing, &c. and to pay for such loss or damage out of the money he is to receive at the breaking up of the meeting; but as some waste must be necessarily made, an additional suit of clothing in proportion to every thirty men in each battalion, is to be given annually to the regiment after the first meeting; and at the end of every five years, in

time of peace, the same proportion of clothing, as above stated, to be again provided.

The clothing for the corporals and private men to consist of

- 1 Jacket,
- 1 Waistcoat,
- 1 Pair of breeches,
- 1 Hat or cap,
- 1 Pair of short gayters,
- 1 Stock,
- Corporal's knot.

This clothing might be furnished for one pound five shillings *per* man.

An exact pattern to be established for the whole militia, with a difference of facings and buttons.

When

When the militia might be again embodied, it should be clothed in the same manner as the regulars.

The annual monthly meeting, as at present constituted, appears to me to be a regulation that might be dispensed with; for though it may promote the popularity or interest of individuals in the different counties, and the officers may make themselves known to each other, yet they are not essential objects to Government. But this meeting is productive of the principal part of the expence which the nation incurs on account of the militia; if it did not subsist, there would be no occasion to keep up so many serjeants and drummers upon the establishment; neither would it be necessary to give the men such expensive appointments; and as I am convinced, that the exercise practised during the month, for want of proper regulations,

tends

tends very little towards training the men for service, there can be no absolute occasion, in my humble opinion, for the country to be burthened to amuse or serve the political views of a few country gentlemen. But let us examine a little into what is performed at this expensive exercising meeting, which appears to be the principal object of the Lords lieutenants, Colonels of militia, &c.

When the regiment is assembled, and has assumed its martial appearance, jollity at the regimental mess commences by the officers, and irregularity by the men : Some Commanding officers give their attendance, which is a sacrifice to their ease, but leave the whole conduct of the regiment to the adjutant, who is frequently unequal to the task of forming and guiding such a body of men : Those colonels again, who happen to have a military turn, dress the men
in

in fancy caps and feathers, and other ornaments of parade ; I do not mean to say, that this is improper, on the contrary, it tends to promote cleanliness, and favor discipline ; I only wish to state the advantages that result to the nation for the expence of this jubilee : When the commanding officer is satisfied with the dress of his troops, he is anxious to have the men in battalion, and hurries them from their more essential drilling exercise, to burn powder, and perform what are generally called manœuvres, which are practised without method, and performed without precision ; thus this whole month is spent, in the pursuit of immaterial objects ; whilst every man's mind is bewildered with a complex jumble of various exercises, without knowing one that is essential ; at the conclusion, the officers are melancholy at being obliged to relinquish their convivial scenes ; and the militia-man bears

bears the seeds of dissipation along with him to his hamlet or village, and spreads the contagion throughout the whole neighbourhood.

Instead of this exercising meeting, I shall propose another on a smaller scale.

On the day of the Colonel or Commanding officer is to order the adjutant to assemble the Sergeants, Corporals and Drummers in the county town, or elsewhere, as may be found convenient; allowing these non-commissioned officers two days to march to the place of rendezvous, and twelve days for exercise and other services that might be required of them preparatory to the assembling of the militia: At the expiration of the fourteen days appropriated to the adjutant and non-commissioned officers, one Field officer, one Captain, two Lieutenants, two Ensigns, and

and one fifth of the private men, that is, one district of the battalion, should assemble at the place appointed for the meeting of the non-commissioned officers ; allowing for each militia-man two days to march from his place of abode ; one day to receive his arms and appointments ; twenty-nine days to exercise ; one day to deliver his arms and appointments into store ; and two days to return home ; in all thirty-five days.

The districts are to be exercised progressively, as follows : No. 5, in the spring of 1786 ; No. 1, in 1787 ; No. 2, in 1788 ; No. 3, in 1789 ; No. 4, in 1790 ; and No. 5 again in 1791, &c. By pursuing this method, the whole Militia would be trained in five years ; and then there would be only the new men to exercise annually. If it be inconvenient for a Field officer to attend this meeting, two Captains to be present ; and the officers for this service to be no-

minated at the discretion of the Colonel ;
The attendance of these officers is only
to preserve order and regularity ; and if
there be a sufficient number for that
purpose, it is all that is requisite.

The officers to be paid as follows :
Officer commanding twelve shillings *per*
day ; Captain, ten shillings ; Lieutenant,
four shillings and eight-pence ; Ensign
three shillings and eight-pence.

The necessary employment and exer-
cise for a militia-man, is to learn to
clean his arms, and take care of his ap-
pointments ;

To Face to the Right and Left, and
to the Right about ;

To March a measured pace, looking
to the Front, to the Right, and to
the Left ;

To Form three deep, and to Wheel
to the Right and to the Left ;

To Prime and Load ;

To Present and Fire.

The

The men should be out at exercise twice a day for the first fortnight, and exercised separately; the last fortnight only once a day (excepting those who might be particularly awkward) when they should be exercised together; in the last week, they should fire powder every day; and during the whole meeting, they should be accustomed to the ordinary duties of mounting guard; standing sentry; parades, &c. This exercise to be regulated in such a manner, that the daily employment of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and private should be ascertained, and the whole militia trained exactly upon the same principle, without the smallest deviation permitted: If such regulations were made, and strictly complied with by the adjutants, the militia would be perfectly uniform when united; an object of infinite importance to whoever might have the honor to command them.

A loose state of the expence of a battalion of militia of five hundred and sixty men for one year, according to the present system.

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Adjutant <i>per ann.</i> -	109	10	0
Care of arms, &c. -	25	0	0
27 Serjeants, at 18 <i>l.</i> 5 <i>s.</i> each	492	15	0
1 Serjeant major in addition	6	10	0
17 Drummers, at 9 <i>l.</i> 2 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> each -	155	2	6
1 Drum major -	18	5	0
Battalion clerk -	50	0	0

Officers for the exercising period.

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
9 Captains	94	10	0
10 Lieutenants	49	0	0
9 Ensigns	37	16	0
		181	6 0

560 Men

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
560 Men for 28 days -	784	0	0
Corporals in addition -	18	18	0
Clothing 27 serjeants at 3l. 10s. each -	94	10	0
Ditto 18 Drummers at 2l. each -	36	0	0
Serjeant major and drum major in addition -	2	0	0
Clothing 560 private at 1l. 10s. <i>per</i> man, for 3 years 840l. — one year -	280	0	0
Total <i>per ann.</i>	2253	16	6

Which in the same
proportion for 30740
militia, amounts an-
nually to - 123,673 12 3 $\frac{1}{2}$

This sum is infinitely short of the esti-
mate made by government, and of
course of the expence.

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	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Adjutant <i>per ann.</i> -	109	10	0
Care of arms, &c. -	25	0	0
27 Serjeants, at 18l. 5s. each	492	15	0
1 Serjeant major in addition	6	10	0
17 Drummers, at 9l. 2s. 6d.			
each -	155	2	6
1 Drum major -	18	5	0
Battallion clerk -	50	0	0

Officers for the exercising period.

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
9 Captains	94	10	0
10 Lieutenants	49	0	0
9 Ensigns	37	16	0
		181	6 0

560 Men

(12)

	<i>l.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
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mate made by government, and of
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A loose

A loose state of the expence of a Battalion of militia of five hundred and sixty men, for one year, according to the proposed plan.

	l.	s.	d.
Adjutant, <i>per ann.</i>	109	10	0
Care of arms, &c.	25	0	0
11 Serjeants, at 18l. 5s. each	200	15	0
5 Drummers, at 9l. 2s. 6d. each	45	12	6
11 Corporals, at 2l. 2s. each	23	2	0
Battalion clerk	50	0	0
Clothing 11 serjeants at 3l. 10s. each.	38	10	0
Ditto 5 drummers at 2l. each	10	0	0

Officers

elool A

(31)

Officers for the exercising period.

1 Officer commanding at 12s.

per day - 21 0 0

1 Captain at 10s.

ditto - 17 10 0

2 Lieutenants at

4s. 8d. ditto - 16 6 8

2 Ensigns at 3s.

8d. ditto - 12 16 8

11 Corporals for 49 days at

1s. each per day - 26 19 0

100 Private at

6d. per day

each, for 35

days - 96 5 0

Ditto at 10s.

6d. each - 57 15 0

154 0 0

(32)

121 Suits of L. & d. l. & s. d.
clothing at 11.

55 per suit 151 5 00

18 Suits annu-
ally for 4 years

72 suits at

11. 5s. 0 00 10 00

5 12 4 5 00

8 12 10 8

Total per annum 799 6 10

Which in the same
proportion for
30,740 militia
amounts annual-
ly to

43,859 7 11

Annual

d. Annual expence according to the present system in the above calculation - - 123,673 12 3 $\frac{1}{2}$

Annual expence according to the proposed system 43,859 7 11 $\frac{1}{2}$

Annual saving to government - 79,814 4 3 $\frac{1}{2}$

If this plan were adopted, a saving, by this loose estimate, of near eighty thousand pounds a year would be made to the nation ; the militia would be gradually prepared for service, by having more than six thousand men in constant annual training upon fixed principles ; and it would be equally ready to be embodied as under the present regulations.

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In

In time of war, the militia might be embodied according to the rules already made, or to be made by the Select Committee.

The campaign seldom continues longer than the 20th of November, when the different bodies of militia, whose time is expired, should march to their several districts and be disembodied; those districts, though balloted, should not be again embodied till the 1st of April, when they might join their regiments and prepare for the ensuing campaign; during this period of four months, from December 1st, to April 1st, the whole pay of the disembodied men should be stopped by government; Thus upwards of six thousand men would be at their liberty every year; and though some Colonels might be anxious to retain their substitutes, the expence of four months subsistence
added

added to the usual bounty-money, would deter many of them from it; I should therefore think, that a part of those substitutes, having acquired the habits of soldiers, and being deprived of their daily subsistence, would be naturally inclined to enlist themselves into the army.

When the campaign is at an end, every battalion of militia should permit forty men out of every fifty to go home for four months at their own request, under the consideration that their pay be stopped by government from December 1st, to April 1st: This indulgence might not meet with the approbation of those gentlemen, who think it necessary to keep their battalions together during the winter, under the idea of improving the discipline of the corps; but I am of opinion, that if the springs of discipline be lowered a little, when the campaign is over, unless there might be an enemy

in the country, that the soldier, on his return to his regiment, would enter upon his military profession with more ardour and greater satisfaction both to himself and his officers, than if he had been confined to the daily routine of service in a dull country town.

There may be a necessity to keep one or more battallions entire, for some particular emergency or situation, and for which a provision should be made.

When the regiments march out of their counties, they should not be removed to the most distant parts of the kingdom from their own abode ; neither does it answer any essential purpose to be perpetually marching the regiments from Cornwall to Northumberland, or from Carlisle to Plymouth ; it creates a very considerable annual contingent expence, and fatigues the service

vice unnecessarily ; but this is rather a matter for subsequent regulation.

If the association of the smaller corps of militia should be found impracticable, they might be made useful in proportion to their numbers ; but there cannot be any necessity for them to have colours, a staff, &c. &c. similar to the larger battalions.

The division into five districts, and the time of service for the men, to subsist equally throughout the whole militia ; but as the numbers in this division would be too small for exercise in those corps that are under four hundred men, the following mode for training them might be instituted.

The Cumberland of	320	men.
Huntingdon	320	
Glamorgan	360	
		Years

Years
of
exercise.

Districts of each
corps to be
exercised.

1786

No. 4 and 5

1787

No exercise

1788

No. 1 and 2

1789

No exercise

1790

No. 3 and 4

The Monmouth of 240 men

Westmoreland 240

Denbigh 280

Montgomery 240

Carmaerthen 200

Years
of
exercise.

Districts of each
corps to be
exercised.

1786

No exercise

1787

No. 4 and 5

1788

No exercise

1789

No. 1, 2, 3

1790

No exercise

The

The Rutland of 120 men.

Anglesea 80

Brecknock 160

Pembroke 160

Years
of
exercise.

Districts of each
corps to be
exercised.

1786

No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

1787

No exercise

1788

Ditto

1789

Ditto

1790

Ditto

The Cardigan of 120 men

Carnarvon 80

Flint 120

Monmouth 80

Radnor 120

Years

Years of exercise.	Districts of each corps to be exercised.
1786	No exercise
1787	No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
1788	No exercise
1789	Ditto
1790	Ditto.

There must be also some little deviations from the general principle before established, relative to clothing non-commissioned officers, &c. but such trifles might be adjusted without much difficulty.

It appears to me that this plan is of great public utility, and I cannot perceive any solid objections against the general principles of it ; it is framed in oeconomy, because the nation cannot afford to give so large a sum as formerly towards

towards the support of militia ; but that I should think would be rather a merit than a defect ; a saving of such a considerable sum of money to the state, as I have pointed out, is certainly a concern of the utmost importance in this moment of general distress ; and as soon as I became acquainted with the resolutions of the Lords Lieutenants, Colonels of Militia, &c. &c. without the least disposition to wantonly change or innovate an established system, I thought I was not justified in withholding my sentiments from the public, which I trust will be a sufficient apology for troubling them with this hasty publication.

F I N I S.

(41)
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